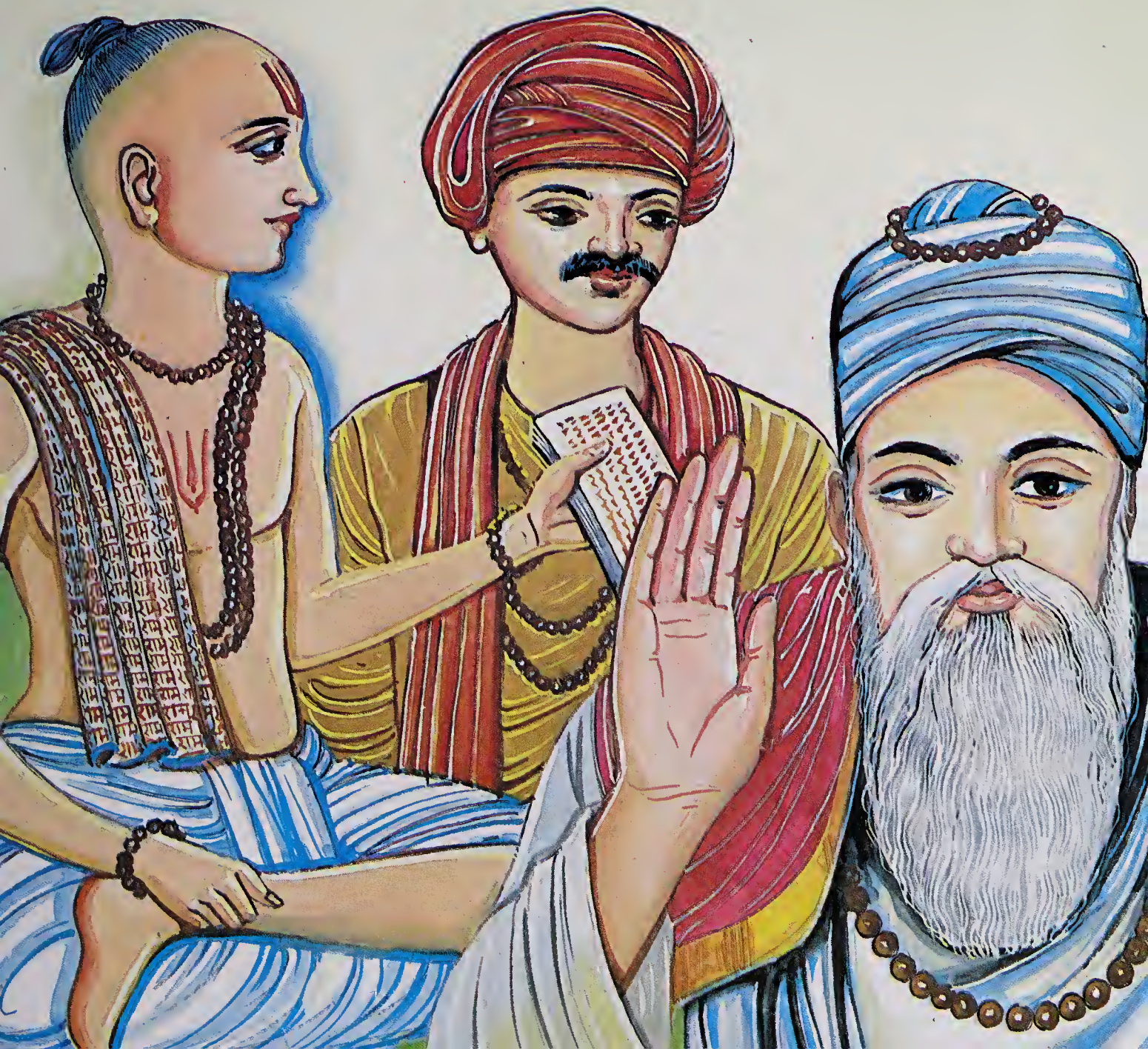


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SAINTS OF INDIA



PRABHAT PRAKASHAN

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SAINT TULSIDAS

Tulsidas lived in the 16th century. He had a very persuasive and sweet voice and style of poetry. His poems provided a healing touch to the otherwise unhappy people of those times. He provided a new mode of hymn singing and through his poems exhorted the people to follow the path of duty. He was born in Rajapur village in Banda district. The name of his mother was Hushi and that of his father was Atmaram Dubey. He was a Sanyasin Brahmin.

It is said that at the time of birth he had thirty two teeth and he uttered the word 'Rama'. Unfortunately his mother died soon afterwards and he was brought up by a maid, Chuni, who also expired after five years. By the grace of God, Swami Narharidas found the child. He named him Ramabala and took him to Ayodhya.

The 'sacred thread ceremony' of Ramabala took place when he was seven years old and at that time he recited the *Gayatri Mantra*. This amazed everyone present on the occasion as Ramabala had not been taught Gayatri Mantra by any one. His *guru* taught him *Ram Mantra* and he learnt the rudiments of education in a short time. He went to Kashi and there studied Sanskrit literature for fifteen years.

He then returned to his place of birth and started singing hymns in praise of Rama. He married a beautiful Bhardwaj brahmin girl. He loved his wife very much and once went to meet her without being invited while she was at her father's place. She did not like it and reprimanded him several times. Tulsidas felt much pain at the harsh



language used by his wife. He returned and put on the robes of a saint and started travelling all over the country in search of God. At the end he came across Lord Rama at Chitrakut. This inspired him to write the life story of Rama. He then went to Ayodhya.

Tulsidas was not only a poet and saint but also a social reformer. He felt that the society was degenerating and the people had become very inactive. Infact they had become so inert that they were not fit even to defend their temples and women. This was a great social malady. Tulsidas thought of reforming the society. With this aim in view he decided to write *Ramacharit Manas* in such simple language that even the common man may understand this and take a cue from this. Besides, it should be devotional so that the common man may feel drawn towards it. During 1631-1633 he devoted himself completely to writing *Ramacharita Manas* and completed it in seven sections.

Tulsidas focussed attention on the stand taken by Rama when his wife Sita had been abducted by Ravana. At that time he was without any help and army. He had to face a much mightier king who had a vast army. But Rama was able to get the support of animals, monkeys, apes and bears and with their help was able to defeat Ravana. This shows that in such a situation even birds and animals do not forgive the villain and are willing to support the just cause and to sacrifice their lives.

Some people opposed *Ramcharita Manas*. They tried to destroy it. But they failed; society did not permit them to do so. Today *Ramacharita Manas* is as popular as the *Vedas*. Tulsidas wrote several other books. His *Vinay Patrika* became very famous. The people of India have always held him in very great esteem.

SAINT JNANESHWAR

Saint Jnaneshwar's father, Vitthal Patel, was a resident of Aape village. He was a Brahmin. Vitthal Patel was a highly religious person. He married Rukmini Devi, but after some time he took discipleship from Swami Ramanand and became an ascetic.

One day Rukmini Bai had gone to the peepal tree to worship it. There Swami Ramanand gave her the blessing that she would bear a son. Rukmini Devi told him the entire story and told him that her husband had already become an ascetic. Thereupon Swami Ramanand asked Vitthal Patel to renounce ascetism and once again lead a happy married life.

Thereafter Vitthal Patel had four children. Three of these were sons: Nivrittinath, Jnaneshwar and Sopandev and one daughter Mukti Bai. All the four occupy a special position among the saints of Maharashtra. Since Vitthal Patel had become a householder after renouncing ascetism, the conventional priests made him an outcaste. He felt repentant and very sad. Finally he went to Allahabad and alongwith his wife drowned himself.

The four children started begging in order to earn livelihood. Those opposed to their father took revenge upon them and put them to much harassment. One Brahmin in particular, named Bisova, used to trouble the children very much. But on seeing the patience and miracles performed by Jnaneshwar he also became his devoted disciple.

With the permission of Brahmins the four children went to perform penance at Paithan. There, it is said, Jnaneshwar made a



bull recite *Vedic Mantras* (incantations). All the Brahmins were deeply impressed by this and made them join the caste again. But this was done with the explicit stipulation that none of them will marry to bear children. The four accepted this condition also.

They left Paithan and lived for some time in Mahalaya Devi temple in Ahmedabad. There saint Jnaneshwar composed 'Jnaneshwari' which contains nine thousand couplets and explains seven hundred couplets from Gita. These couplets have become very popular in Maharashtra. It is said that Jnaneshwar used to recite only and Sachchidanand, who was saved from death by Jnaneshwar, used to write. In the end he prayed that man should have wisdom, right thinking, right action.

Jnaneshwar has also written religious songs. This hurt the pride of Changdev. He alongwith his disciples went to meet Jnaneshwar riding a lion. Instead of a whip he used a live snake. When he reached there he found that Jnaneshwar, along with his brothers and sister, was sitting on a platform which was broken at places. At Jnaneshwar's command the platform started moving. On seeing this Changdev was deeply impressed and became a disciple of Jnaneshwar.

After that Jnaneshwar started on a pilgrimage. Wherever he went, he sung devotional songs which attracted large crowds including Brahmins. They all enjoyed the songs. Finally Jnaneshwar returned to Pandharpur. He then decided to go into *samadhi* (trance). He chose a place at Alandi near Puna. At that time Jnaneshwar was just twenty two years old.

A cave was erected and a platform was made inside the cave. Saint Jnaneshwar sat on the platform. Then his brother Nivrattinath shut the mouth of the cave with a big stone and left Jnaneshwar praying to God and going into *samadhi*. It is believed to be on 25th October 1296. Even today there is a big festival on this date at Alandi. Within a year of Jnaneshwar going into *samadhi*, his brothers and sister also took *samadhi*. Saint Jnaneshwar always opposed untouchability. We all should take lesson from his life.

SAMARTHA RAMADAS

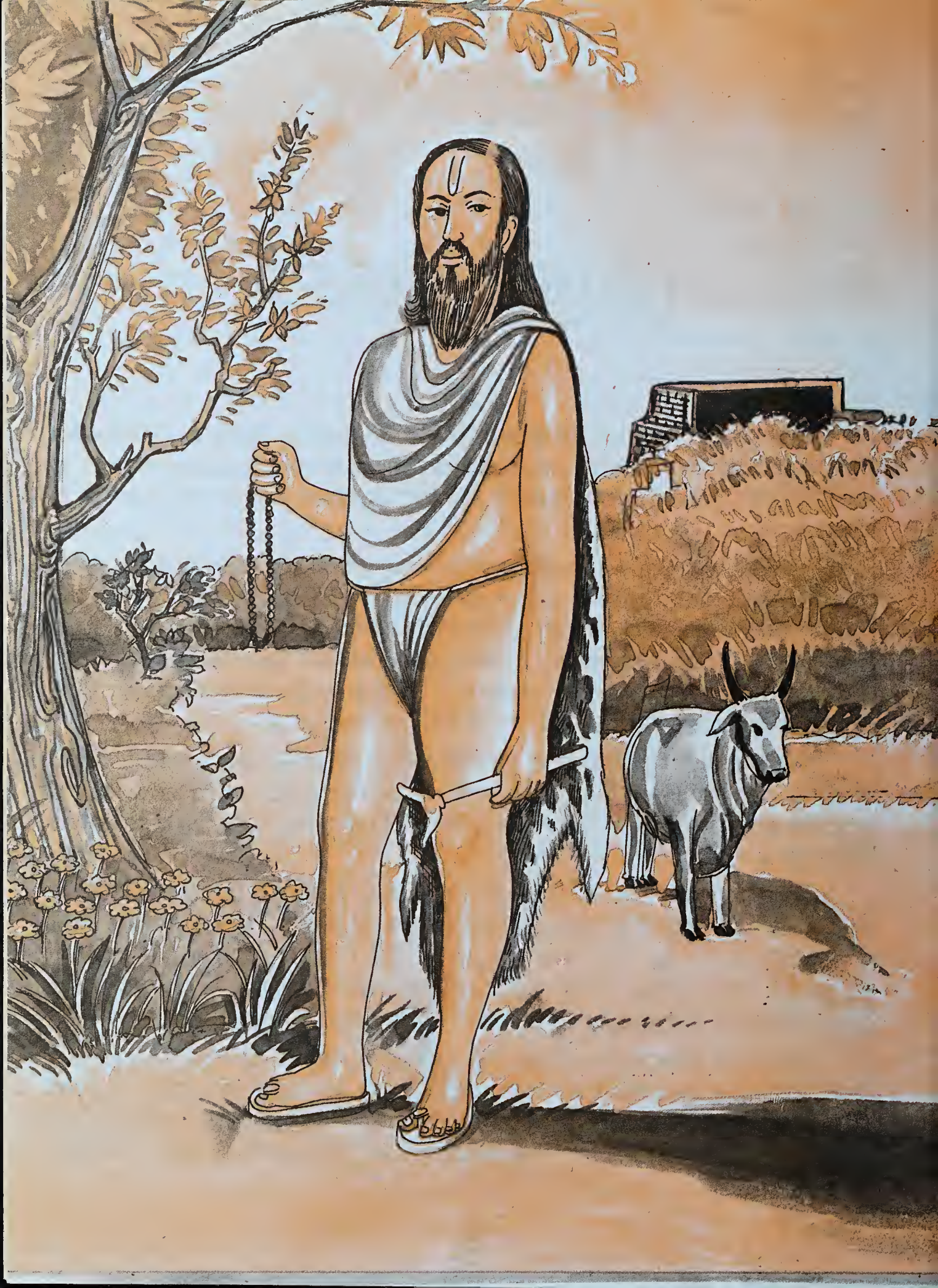
Samartha Ramadas was the son of Suryaji Pant and Renuka Bai. In childhood he was named Narayana and was born in 1605 in village Jamb in Marathawada. His father died when he was still a child.

When his mother insisted much he gave his consent for marriage. That was when he was twelve years old. But just when he sat for the marriage and Brahmins started reciting incantations he heard them pronounce 'Beware'. Thereupon he left the place and ran away saying, "I will not get married. I have to awaken Maharashtra and my whole country. My life is for my country."

He went to Nasik and at the bank of river Godavari started singing devotional songs and meditations. One day Lord Rama appeared before him. Afterwards he became popular as "Samartha Ramadas."

One day he blessed a woman that she would have eight sons. She told him that her husband had just expired. He went with her and poured water into the mouth of the husband saying, "Jai Shri Raghubir Samartha." The husband revived and the woman gave birth to eight sons in her life. This made him very popular.

He had great courage. He made a round of river Godavari. One day he reached Pandharpur. There he saw an idol of Lord Vitthal Dev. He called out, "Jai Shri Raghubir Samartha" and started singing devotional songs. The disciples of Lord Vitthal Dev and the



Brahmins objected. But Ramadas continued. It is said that Lord Vitthal Dev then appeared before Brahmins and his disciples as Lord Rama. All were impressed by the devotion of Ramadas to Lord Rama.

Ramadas was a social reformer. He travelled far and wide. This was the time when invaders were attacking India and plundering its wealth. Mughal soldiers were destroying Hindu temples. He came into contact with Shivaji. He was happy to meet him. He told Shivaji to take on the Mughal emperor and that he would win in the end. So it happened.

One day Ramadas went to Shivaji with a begging bowl in his hands. He asked for alms. Shivaji thought for a minute. Then he wrote something on a piece of paper and put it in the bowl. When Ramadas took out the paper and read it he found that Shivaji had donated the entire kingdom to Ramadas. He was surprised. He told Shivaji that he was an ascetic and that he wanted only food. He tried to return the paper but Shivaji refused. Then Ramadas told the king that he was an ascetic whose life would be spent in roaming around and commanded Shivaji to administrate the country in his name. Since then Shivaji started using saffron colour for his flag and he administered the kingdom with justice to all.

Ramadas looked after the inauguration ceremony of the temple at Sajjangarh in 1682 in which the idols of Rama, Lakshman, Sita and Hanuman were installed by him. Afterwards he ended his life by a special yogic exercise. He wrote a book 'Dasodh' which is read by thousands of people even today.

SAINT TIRUVALLUVAR

About two thousand years ago there was a weaver by profession named Tiruvalluvar who lived in the south of India. His wife Vasuhi was very gentle. Few people knew about Vasuhi and nobody knew about her parentage, place of birth and caste etc. Some considered her to be a princess because she was very beautiful and had the grace of a queen.

Tiruvalluvar had great regards for his wife. Tiruvalluvar said, "A woman who could protect her chastity, keep her word, is courageous and looks after the needs of her husband is an ideal woman." Vasuhi fulfilled all these conditions.

There is a very interesting story about saint Tiruvalluvar. Once a wicked boy alongwith many other mischievous boys went to market where Valluvar was selling sarees. Valluvar asked that boy as to what he wanted. The boy said, "I need a saree for my mother. What is the price of this saree?" Valluvar said, "Only two rupees." The boy tore the saree into two halves and said, "What is the price of this?" Valluvar replied, "One rupee." The boy went on tearing the saree into bits and kept on asking the same question. Valluvar kept his cool and went on telling the price of the bit. Finally the boy said, "These bits are too small to be of any use to me. I shall not take these." Valluvar said, "You are right." The boy said, "Never mind, I have plenty of money. I have done harm to you. Take these two rupees. You look a poor man." Valluvar refused. He said, "Son ! Do

you think that by paying me two rupees you can compensate for the loss. So many farmers joined together to produce cotton. My wife worked hard to spin yarn out of that cotton. I spent good time dyeing the yarn and later weaving it into a saree. When some one had worn it we all would have been so happy. That was our compensation."

The boy fell at his feet and asked for forgiveness. He was crying; Valluvar lifted the boy and embraced him. He said, "I am happy that you have realised your mistake. One can always weave another saree but one can not give another life."

The boy went home. He was the only son of his father, Anil, who was a very rich trader. He used to export and import merchandise. At that time Indian products like silk, cotton piece goods, pearls, peacock feathers, ivory goods and ironware were in great demand all over the world. The father was very happy to see the changed attitude of the child due to the advice given by Valluvar.

Nobody knew the weaver's name, his residence etc. Some considered him to be a saint while others thought that he was a mad person.

Anil strongly desired to meet the saint. The father and the son started out to search the saint and finally they reached the house of Valluvar. He recognised the boy and asked him to come inside. Both the father and the son became disciples of Valluvar. They used to visit Valluvar often and sought his advice.

Once there was a great famine in the country. Many people died of starvation. Valluvar asked the father to distribute his stock of foodgrains, wealth and everything he possessed among the poor. Anil could not have refused but he said, "If I give away everything, then what will become of me?" Valluvar replied, "Friend ! The clouds shower all the moisture they contain and use even the last drop of water for the benefit of mankind. That is the right attitude. You spend all that you have got and God will help you." Anil did as was directed. Very soon he became very famous not only in his district but



also in the entire country. After some time there was a good harvest in the country. Anil earned more and more and became richer than before.

One day Anil went to Valluvar and said, "You have changed the course of our lives by your advice. Please write a book so that people may read that and benefit. It will bring light to the darkness in the lives of several men. Valluvar agreed. He started writing a book in poetry. In that he wrote about religion and philosophy of life. He was of the opinion that nothing particular need be done to escape the cycle of life and death. If a person performs his duty well in this world then he will become free from the cycle of life and death. It contained thirteen hundred couplets and was completed in a short time.

About that time there was a convention of learned persons in Madurai. No book written in Tamil could be printed and distributed without the permission of this convention. Valluvar presented his book before the learned persons. At first they did not take the book seriously. They thought that it was too short to contain anything worthwhile. However when the chairman insisted and recitations were made from the book, every one present there was surprised. They welcomed Valluvar with open arms and great respect. The like of this literary piece does not exist in Tamil literature. The couplets are written in Kural and are known as 'Tirukural', which means sacred Kural book. Since then he became famous in Tamil region.

After some time his wife expired. He followed *Vedas* in life. So he became an ascetic after the death of his wife. When he was about to die he told his disciples and friends, "After some time I shall die. Please take my dead body to the forest and leave it there so that the wild animals in the forest shall eat my flesh; and one day the bones will merge into the soil from which they had risen." This was done after his death. He was truly a great saint.

GURU NANAK

Guru Nanak was born on 15th of April, 1469 in village Talwandi which was about sixty km away from Lahore, near the bank of river Ravi. His father's name was Kalu Mehta who was a *patwari* of the landlord of Raibular.

Nanak was a jovial, witty and intelligent boy from his childhood days. He always preferred the company of saints and hermits. One day when he was asleep a serpent crawled near him but instead of biting him the snake just stood there and watched him. This impressed the onlookers and even the Raibular.

When he was sixteen years old his father gave him money to start some business. Nanak started with his friend. On the way he came across a few beggars who had not taken their food for about a week. He bought clothes and food for them and returned. He did not go home as he feared that his father would scold him. But his friend told his father everything.

His father became very angry. He wanted to beat him. But his sister Nanaki covered him in her embrace and thus saved him from being beaten.

At the age of nineteen he was married to Sulakshana and had two sons from her named Shrichand and Laxmichand. The elder son Shrichand became a famous saint while the younger one lead a family life.



Nanaki took her brother Nanak to Sultanpur. There he was appointed distributor of food in the granery of the landlord. He counted upto twelve and when he started giving the thirteenth measure he said, "Tera, Tera" and thereafter weighed several times but just said "Tera, Tera" (the word means both thirteenth and yours). The people complained to the landlord that he was giving away so much without proper counting. The landlord asked other men to weigh the foodgrains and to check the accounts. On checking up everything was found in order and the stock was correct. Nanak left the job afterwards. The landlord and others who had complained felt very sorry.

He started travelling with saints all over the country. This continued for twenty five years. He met Hindu saints, Muslim ascetics, priests and religious followers from all faiths in Punjab. He went to Aminabad, Haridwar, Delhi, Kashi, Jagannath Puri and several other places. This was his first travel. On his second journey he went to Arbudgiri, Rameshwarm, Sinhaldweep etc. His third journey took him to Garhwal, Hemkoot, Gorakhpur, Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. On the fourth lap of his journey he went to Baluchistan, Mecca etc. and on the way back went to Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. On all these places he spread the message of brotherhood and exhorted people to believe in God. He told his audiences to give up conservatism.

The king of Delhi was cruel. He imprisoned him alongwith many other saints and ordered them to grind food. Nana gladly did so. Everyone was happy with him. Many Muslim saints told the king to release Nanak and the king showed his willingness to do so. But Nanak insisted that other saints should also be released with him. Finally the king agreed.

After that Nanak went to Kashmir, Tibet and Mansarovar. There he came across many saints and learned persons. He learnt a lot from them. One learned saint Bhatriji went with him to Kartarpur.

At the bank of Ravi, Guru Nanak established a village Kartarpur and his parents, wife and children came to live with him there.

He went to Sri Lanka. There the kings were always fighting with each other. Nanak made them have truce. Finally he went to Mecca. One day he was sleeping there with his feet towards the holy place. One of the Muslim Qazi woke him up and told him that he should not have his feet towards the holy place. Nanak said, "Okay, but turn my feet towards the place where God does not reside." The Qazi turned his feet to the other direction but he was surprised to see the holy place in that direction too. In whichever direction he turned Nanak's feet he saw the holy place there only. The Qazi was put to shame and asked for forgiveness. In Baghdad people called him the Learned Man from India.

In Kabul he met Babar. He came to know that Babar wanted to invade India. Thereafter he returned to India to learn that Babar had attacked India and was slaughtering Hindus. He got himself arrested alongwith several thousands of Hindus. When he faced Babar he told him finally that Babar was doing a wrong. Babar realised his mistake and let go all the prisoners.

In 1538 he appointed Angad as his successor. He died in the same year. The Hindus constructed a holy building over his burial place and the Muslims made a tomb. But the floods of Ravi levelled both. He wrote 'Japaji Sahib'. His spoken couplets were given a prominent place in Guru Grantha Sahib by the fifth Guru of Sikhs, Guru Arjun Devji.

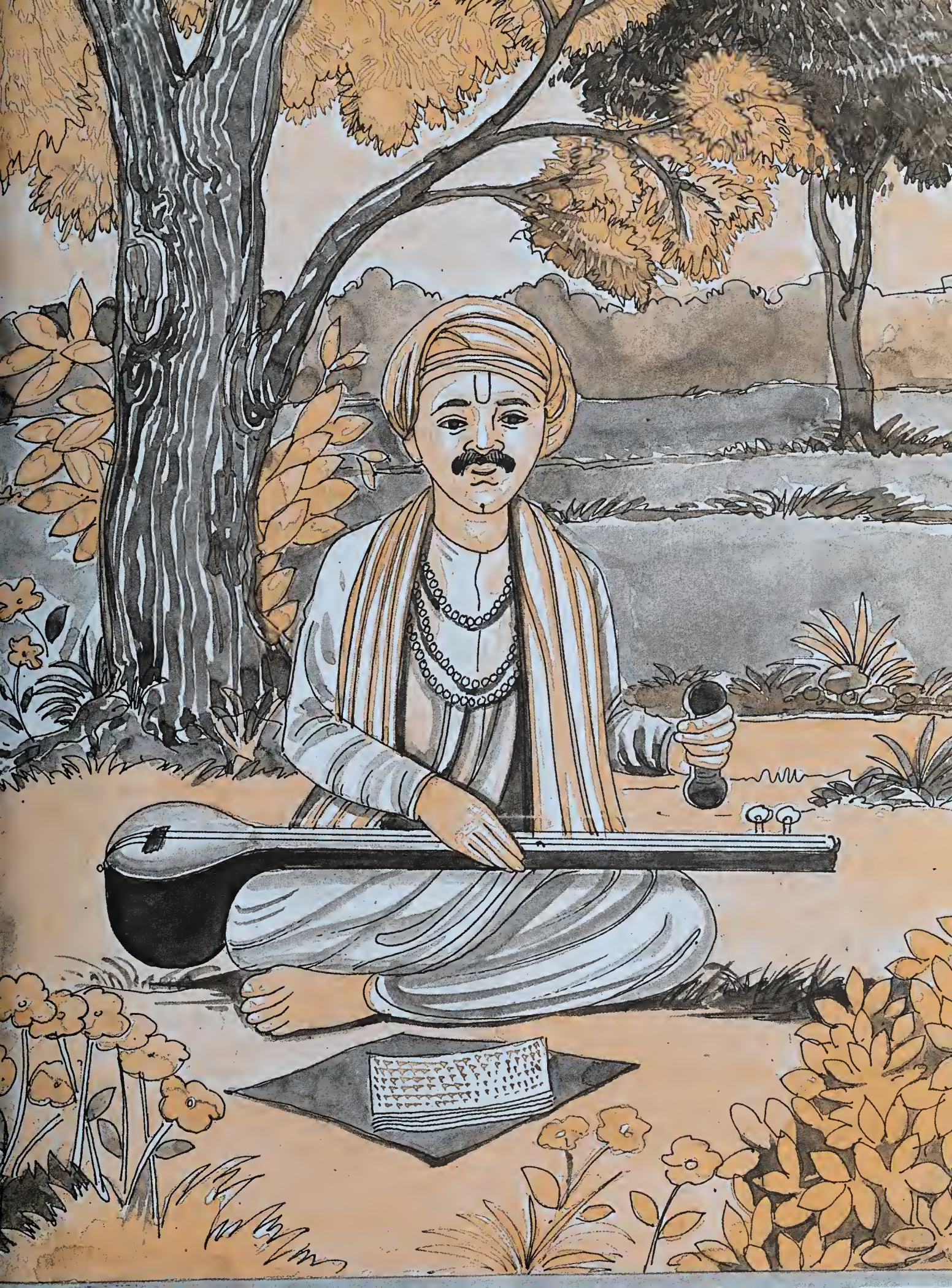
SAINT TUKARAM

Saint Tukaram is very famous in Maharashtra. He was very learned. He did not believe that one could realise God only by reading *Vedas* or other holy scriptures. He believed that there was a simple way to realise God and that was through devotion.

He was born in a high caste Ambile family in village Dehu at the bank of river Indrayani about twenty two km from Pune. He was born in 1608 to Bahoba (father's name) and Kankai (mother's name). He belonged to Kunvi caste. His forefathers were known as Dehukar Gosain and More. At some time the members of his family were soldiers. Later they gave it up and took to business. So they came to be known as *Banias*. Tukaram was also a professional trader. But he was never proud of his high caste. He freely mixed with low caste Hindus. He used to say, "I am an untouchable and so do not have the right to read the *Vedas*. I am low and my parents are God. If I were educated, I could not have served the saints. Those who pride upon their birth or position go to hell."

His forefathers had been to Pandharpur and thereafter became Barkari. He also went to Pandharpur a number of times. His first wife Rakhmai was asthmatic. He married a second time. His second wife was Jijabai who bore him three sons and one daughter. The eldest son did not marry all his life.

Tukaram was never interested in trading. He wanted to give all his wealth to others for their well being. Many persons, who borrowed from him, never returned the amount. He suffered losses and



was forced to close the shop. Then he started selling salt like a peddler.

One day when he was returning home after selling goods an old man met to him and fell into his feet. He wanted help. His young son had died. His land and house had been mortgaged to the landlord. Tukaram gave him fifty rupees and returned home penniless. Such incidents occurred in his life fairly often.

There was a famine in 1630. During this period his first wife and son died. His father and mother had already expired long back. He got frustrated and left his home. He then started living in a cave.

He used to write poetry in *Abhang Chhand* (a kind of verse). Those days *Bania* farmers did not sing prayers. This was left to Brahmins. So the Brahmins were very annoyed with Tukaram. They sent a prostitute to him so that they could cast aspersions on his character. But he called her 'mother'. She became his disciple. Still the Brahmins were not satisfied. They forced him to throw away his verses in the river. He sat on an indefinite fast after throwing his verses in the river. After seventeen days these were returned to him by a boy. This spread his fame far and wide.

Shivaji used to go to him to listen his religious songs. He offered him much wealth but Tukaram refused to take these. One day Shivaji was encircled by the Mughal army while he was listening to the songs sung by Tukaram. But God granted Tukaram's request and Shivaji escaped unhurt.

Tukaram led a family life but he was a great follower of religion and devoted himself to God. He never begged. It is said that one day he became invisible while singing hymns in praise of Lord Vitthal. He was then forty one years of age. He did not believe in untouchability and said that the untouchables could get over their problems only when they sang hymns. He was *Vaish* while Gora was a potter; Raidas was a cobbler; Kabir was a weaver; Latif was a Muslim; Dadu was a spinner of yarn; and Banka was an untouchable. But all of them were great devotees. So was Tukaram.

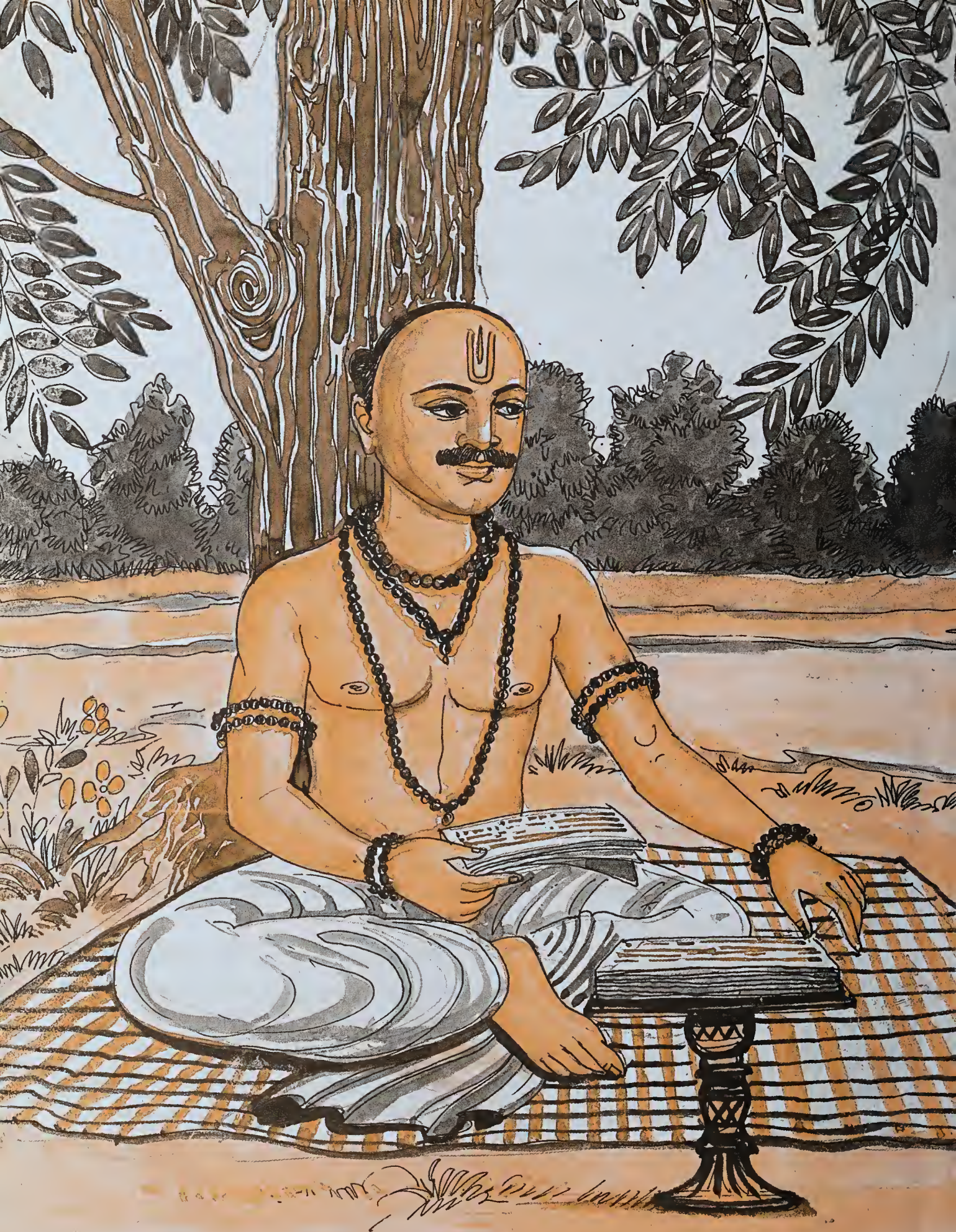
SAINT NAMDEV

Namdev was one of the very famous saints of Maharashtra. He wrote several books in Marathi and several verses in Hindi. The Sikhs have included sixty one verses by Namdev in Guru Grantha Sahib.

His father, Damashet, was a tailor. His mother, Gonai, was a pious woman. The parents used to live in Narsivamani village in district Parmarna in Marathwada. Afterwards they moved to Pandharpur. Here Namdev was born. Damashet was a devotee of Lord Vitthal. He used to take the child Namdev with him to the temple of Lord Vitthal.

Namdev was gentle by nature. He was merciful and used to love all men, birds and beasts. One day as he sat down to take his meals a dog came near him. He took away one of the chapatis that he was eating. But the chapati was dry. Namdev thought that the dog might find it tasteless and ran after the dog to put some *ghee* on it. The dog thought that he was being chased to be punished and ran very fast. But Namdev ran faster and stopped only when he had put *ghee* on the chapati.

He was married at the age of eleven years. His wife, Rajai, gave birth to four sons named Narayan, Mahadev, Govind and Bithova. All were religious by temperament. He had a maid, Janabai, who was also very religious. She composed several verses and those verses are sung with great enthusiasm in Maharashtra. She occupies a very high position among saints of Maharashtra. The entire family



was never materialistic. They would share whatever they had with others.

It is said that in Pandharpur one Brahmin had the mythical stone which could turn iron into gold by mere touch. His wife gave it to Rajai and she converted all the utensils in the house into gold. When Namdev came to know of it he distributed these among poor and threw away the stone into river Chandrabhaga. The owner of the stone and his wife started crying. Namdev dived into the river and took out several stones. Every stone, touched by Namdev could convert iron into gold. The couple realised the greatness of Namdev and became his disciples. This made him very famous. His fame turned his head and he became very proud.

One day he went to meet Saint Jnaneshwar. But he did not pay respects to Jnaneshwar. Then the sister of Jnaneshwar, Muktabai, asked one of the potters present there to test, as he did with pottery, as to which man present there was a hypocrite. The potter took a stick and struck it on the heads of several disciples present there. Everybody sat quietly. When he struck it on the head of Namdev he got up in anger and said, "What is this? Are you mad?" Thereupon the potter cried, "I have found a hollow man. He is the hypocrite." Namdev left the place and narrated the incident to Lord Vitthal in the temple. Lord Vitthal told him to go to an old man and to get knowledge from him.

Namdev set out to find a *guru*. He reached a Shiva temple. There he saw an old man, with shoes on, who was keeping his feet on the *Shivalinga*. He thought that the old man was a great fool and that there was no need to take him as his *guru*. But he thought of the advice given by the Lord. He woke up that old man and asked him to remove his feet from the *Shivalinga*. The old man said, "Brother! I am very old. Kindly help me." Namdev tried to remove his feet but wherever he put the feet he saw a *Shivalinga*. The entire room was filled with *Shivalinga*. Then he realised that God was everywhere. Bisova blessed him.

He went on a pilgrimage with saint Jnaneshwar. He sang hymns at Aanvadhya. The Brahmins there were annoyed that in a Shiva temple hymns pertaining to Vishnu be sung. The saints went to the back of the temple and started singing hymns there. But the temple moved and changed its direction. Then every one present understood that Shiva and Vishnu are one. Namdev and his four sons were present when Jnaneshwar went into *Samadhi* (trance).

Namdev preached about the greatness of God in Punjab for twenty years. There still exists one temple in village Dhoman in Gurdaspur which is named after Namdev. He went into a trance at the age of eighty years at the steps of the temple of Lord Vithhal.

SAINT NARSI MEHTA

Narsi Mehta was born in Talaja village in Saurashtra. Later he, along with his parents, went to Junagarh. From childhood he was of religious temperament and devoted himself to singing hymns etc. He was very quiet and simple man who always cared for the benefit of others. When he grew up, he sang sweetly hymns composed in praise of Lord Krishna.

After the death of his parents he was to look after the needs of the family. He was married at an early age. He used to come home late. Being quiet by disposition, he would not care about the food and would go to sleep without eating if there was no food left for him. His wife, Manik, was not happy at this treatment given to him by his sister-in-law. She asked him to earn a living but he did not care about it.

One day he ran away from home because of ill treatment of his sister-in-law. He went to Girnar forests which is famous for lions and tigers and in a dilapidated temple meditated upon Lord Shiva. The Lord was finally pleased and appeared before him and blessed him. He then returned to Junagarh and started living separately.

His wife looked after the home and he devoted himself to the service of saints. He had two children, Shamaldas and daughter Kunwar Bai. Narsi only cared about the Lord and it is said that the Lord himself got his son, Shamal, married. Likewise one day he brought *ghee* from the market for certain ceremonies connected with the death of his father and then started singing songs. The entire



ceremony, including feasting by Brahmins, was got done by the Lord himself.

He was the first person to have called the untouchables as *harijans*. When the Brahmins showed their anger to him on his mixing up with *Harijans*, he said, "I am Vaishnavi. I love all beings irrespective of their caste." At the death of his son and his wife he felt that God had now spared him sometime for devotion purposes.

Narsi was a contemporary of Meera and Tulsi. Meera was influenced by him and then only she fell in love with Lord Krishna. People became jealous of him and complained to the king. The king said, "If Narsi is a true devotee and really serves God then the necklace around the neck of deity in Vishnu temple should itself get around Narsi's neck." The temple was locked and soldiers were put outside. Next day everyone saw Narsi wearing the same necklace. Everyone recognised his greatness.

RAMANUJACHARYA

Mahabhutpuri is a village which is twenty eight km away from Madras. It is also known as Shriperembudur. In this village used to reside a Brahmin Keshavacharya and his wife kantimati. She was very religious. In 1017 a son was born to her who was later known as Ramanuj.

The child was very intelligent from the very beginning. He had very sharp memory, was religious and devoted himself to the service of saints. A devotee, Kanchipurna, used to bypass his house every-day. One day Ramanuj called him in and wished that he may take food with them and that he would press his legs. Kanchipurna told him that he belonged to low caste and so he should not do so. But Ramanuj told him that he did not believe in high and low castes and that he would serve a real devotee.

He was married to a beautiful girl, Rakshamba. After the death of his father he went to live in his own house in Kanchipur. He started studying in a school run by Yadav Prakash. Yadav Prakash was opposed to idol worship. Gradually Ramanuj became famous for his learning. The teacher became jealous and thought of killing him. He took him to Kashi and thought of killing him on the way. But Govind, a cousin of Ramanuj, knew of the plan and told Ramanuj about it. Ramanuj escaped from there. Then he came in contact with a hunter and went with him and his wife to Rameshwaram.

Ramanuj had revolutionary ideas. His uncle told him to go to Goshthipurna, a disciple of Yamunacharya. After trying for eighteen



times Goshtipurna told Ramanuj the secret of incantation but told him not to pass it on. Ramanuj disobeyed. His *guru* cursed him to go to hell after death. Ramanuj said, "If so many people go to heaven because of my telling them the incantation, then I do not mind going to hell." Goshtipurna forgave him.

He did not believe in caste and creed but served everyone with love. He told people to have control over their lust and cravings for goods and to spend one hour every day in religious prayers. He did not believe in hatred and bitterness. He spent all his life loving his fellow beings and doing good to them.



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